

Subject: *Employer attitudes*

C.R.:

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Title:

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Anderson: One thing that I've wondered about is this: since they have to provide housing for nationals, and pay their transportation, and so forth, why is it they want them so badly?

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Santana: Well, of course, they want a stable supply. As the State Employment Department says, "Think of nationals as insurance." Sure, you may have to keep 'em in camps for a week or two, giving 'em subsistence, while there's no work, or domestics are doing your work. But when your domestics drift away, you've still got your nationals. It's insurance. Then, another thing, they're subser-
vient. They are captive labor. It's really not much different from slave days. One grower told me, "I have a man. He's a good man. I want to keep him. His contract's about to expire. What'll I do?" I said, "Give him a letter to take back to Mexico with him. He'll be able to get a visa." This fellow says, "But he'd be free then, wouldn't he, free to go anyplace he wanted?" I says, "Yes." He changed the subject.

Anderson: Is it true that the nationals are exceptionally hard workers, ~~even~~ and that they perform well, even in jobs that they haven't been accustomed to in Mexico?

Santana: Oh, they learn very fast. Yes, a national is twice as good a worker as any local. I guess the locals are spoiled by our soft civilized living. (Ironic laughter.) The national doesn't expect a coffee break in the morning and afternoon, for example. He works like a dog. Even a hungry white man can't keep up with him. There was a fellow came in here one time, he says, "Mister, I need a job real bad." I says, "I haven't got much right now. I can give you a job out with D'Arrigo, but it'll be tough." He says, "That's okay. I'll take it." He was no bum, you understand. He was really doing his level best. At noon, he comes back. He says, "I just couldn't take it. I was killing myself, and still wasn't able to keep up with them." You see why D'Arrigo likes to use nothing but nationals?

Anderson: But they aren't always on piece work, are they? On a straight hourly wage, I wouldn't think there would be the incentive to kill themselves.

Santana: Sometimes they are on piece work, sometimes not. It all depends on what is the practice with locals. ~~Sometimes~~ On picking tomatoes, fruit, things like that, it's mostly all piece work. As far as the incentive is concerned, there's the incentive that they don't want to be sent back to Mexico. They work just as hard one way as the other. Remember, the grower can drive up that old bus any time he thinks they aren't putting out enough, and say, "Okay. Get in."